1984

Oral History Interview: Mary Messenger & Fannie Garrett

Mary Messenger

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DATE 8/2/84 Mary Messenger
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DATE _____ Joanne I. Garrett
(Signature - Witness)

Mary G. Messenger - LUW
August 2, 1984
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DATE August 2

Fannie I. Garrett
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316 Warder Av
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DATE 8/2

Mary Messenger
(Signature - Witness)

Fannie Garrett - LUW
August 2, 1984

LABOR UNION WOMEN

"Our Working Lives"

AN INTERVIEW WITH: Fannie Garrett
& Mary Messinger

CONDUCTED BY: Frances Hensley
with Barbara Matz

September 16, 1984

TAPE #12

Transcribed & typed by: Sally M. Keaton

FH: This is Frances Hensley, Marshall University, Our Working Lives Project. Today's date is September 16, 1984. Today's interviewees are Fannie Garrett, Communication Workers of America and Mary Messinger, American Federation of Teachers.

I'd like to ask both of you some general questions about your union experience. One thing has to do with the work atmosphere. I'm assuming that both of you worked primarily with, with women and I wanted to know if there was a sense of friendship, if you made friends at work were they, ah, social relationships that continued outside work? (pause)

MM: Oh yeah. It's still that way, I've got friends at Maidenform that are still friends from when I worked at Maidenform I'm still friends with. And I have friends that, of the people that I work with right now as long, as well as AFT members that have worked for me. We're good friends. (pause)

FG: I don't, when I first started work, ah, I didn't make friends very easily and, you know I, ah, I blame myself for that. I'm just kind of a private kind of a person. And, I made a lot of acquaintances, you know, always have been kind of, ah, I guess an outgoing person. I talk to people I don't have a problem with, ah, in being, ah, friendly with people but really having friends I don't, I don't seem to do that real well. I notice like later in my life I've been able to do that more than when I was younger. And I think part of it may be that when I first started to work in the telephone industry the majority of my co-workers were white and there was just not that kind of continuity of firendship outside of the office that you could expect, if I had been, ah, like a setting where there were a lot of other minority people.

FH: Was there

FG: That's what I think anyway.

FH: Was there, ah, socializing at work? For instance the (pause) lunches together, the occassional celebration, somebody's birthday, ah, ah, a

covered dish dinner, anything like that?

MM: Anything to have a party. (laughter)

FG: Right, right. That's the way the telephone company is. Some of the people there are like that.

FH: On your lunch break?

MM: Lunch break or right after work.

FG: And retirement parties and baby showers and weddings and things. All kinds of things, you know, they get together for a lot of these kinds of things.

Last year, the year before last I went to my very first retirement party ever in, you know, since I had been with the telephone company. And as I said before I don not believe it was because I was not invited or welcome but I just kind of held myself back from that becuase of my earlier experiences I think, ah, but I feel more free to do that now.

BM: Do you know why Fannie, what, what made you change your mind?

FG: Well, yes. I know what made me change. When I, the very first union picnic that I attended was like 3 years ago and I felt if I was going to run for office I better get out there and get to fraternizing a little bit with thee people. That's just, you know, that's the, ah, the truth of the matter. I felt I better go to this picnic and I went, and I had a pretty good time, you know. And we had a Christmas dance that year and at that time I had been elected President of the local and it would not have been, ah, it would not have been very good for me not to have shown up at the Christmas dance, you know. So I did.

BM: What you described was that as, you felt like you were kind of outnumbered as a minority (FG: Ah huh) and that, that it's hard to let yourself be free enough to make friends. Do you see, is there, is it possible that part of that changed because attitudes are different now than when you

started with CWA? Do you think that had any part in it at all or was it, was it much more in terms of what you were doing?

FG: Well I think the attitudes are different and I think, ah, one of the attitudes that changed was mine.

BM: O.K.

FG: Cause I, I really did have a problem. I think because of some unpleasant incidents I just kind of decided, why I don't want to have anything to do with it. And that's, you know. I had, I was notoriously, I was known notoriously or however that should be, for having a chip on my shoulder. And I had a big chip on my shoulder.

BM: A log huh? (laughs)

FG: That's right, I did.

FH: Is this when you were in Chicago when you first started working for Bell?

FG: When I first started working for Bell I did not, I had just, I think I was just very, I feel that I was a very friendly person and tried to get along with people but you just get smacked down so many times and then you, you develop an attitude that - you don't need me and I don't need you - you know, and that' just the way it's going to be. And for many, many years that's the kind of attitude I had.

FH: Were you, were, did you have friends outside work who were also union people?

FG: See when I first started with company I didn't have friends. Period. I had my family and my job. Because I worked a full-time job and a part-time job and I went to school, too. So that, that's all I could do. But, see, when I first started with the company too, I was not that aware of unions. I just, you know, I just joined because I was told to join and that was it. As a matter of fact in Illinois, when I first started at Illinois Bell I don't remember going to more that 2, 2 union meetings.

And I went to those meetings probably at, ah, contract time like we were talking about earlier. When it was time to find out what was in the contract and I went.

FH: Do you think the, the union provides, ah, or serves a useful social function as well as a political or education function? (pause) You talked about the union picnic.

MM: I don't know sometimes I think that maybe some of the members that I've known over the years, had it not been for that little union meeting and that union picnic or that, ah, month our covered dish dinner we ahd for Christmas or Thanksgiving, that maybe that person was not talking or seeing very many people outside their little realm.

FH: Do you think that's especially true of women who have, who leave work and if they are married and have children who go home and they have a whole evening of, of work ahead of them that it would be hard for them to

MM: It's probably more true of a woman that is the sole supporter of her family than it is, fortunately I was married and didn't have that kind of a problem. I think probably a single parent it would be much more true.

Speaking of friends in the union movement, ah, my, most of my firends are male. It, it's, you know how (Mmm hmm) there's four guys in the federation call me Mom (laugh) and they take me everywhere they go. And they, I guess the younges one's 34, 35. I could probably be any of their mothers. but, ah, I think it's just come from the fact that usually I'm with a bunch of males and it's, I'm the only female around a lot of times and they just never think that I'm anything else but one of the group and we go together.

FH: Is that because of the nature of your job?

MM: No, not of my job but my, should I say volitarism (laughs) in that I'm

a union member, my work through the Harrison County Labor Federation.

FH: I know that some of the women we've talked to earlier in the state have got involved in political activity as a result of their union activity. Was that true for either or both of you?

MM: Well, it's very true for me. I registered to vote as soon as I was old enough and I think if you'll check my voters registration card at the court house you'll probably find that I voted in every election. But up until I got involved in the labor movement I knew very little about voteing, I knew very little about the candidate I voted for, the labor movement has been my whole education to me in politics. And I've been very active in politics, in the labor movement. Non-partisan politics I might add, although I'm a registered democrat. (pause) (laughingly) That's what leads me to such a stir about how do I vote for a govenor this year. (laughs)

BM: You, an I correct, you've been involved in COPE too?

MM: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah. See I was Secretary/Treasurer, Harrison County Labor Federation and if you're secretary/treasurer in the AFL-CIO Central Body and you're not involved in COPE then they should kick you out. (laughs)

FH: COPE being the Committee on Political Education?

MM: Right.

FH: And that's non-partisan?

MM: Right.

FH: Does COPE, is COPE's major purpose to get union members involved in the political process?

MM: Yes. That's exactly what it is, it's Committee on Political Education. Ah, we, we learn how to vote, how to cast a ballot. I didn't know prior to being involved in COPE I didn't know that I could vote a striaght ticket but if there was some, ah, co-worker that was crooked they could change my vote very easily, and it would no longer be a straight ticket. I learned

that, I don't think I ever have, I don't remember ever voting a straight ticket but if I wanted to vote a straight ticket I would put my X up there and then mark everybody I wanted to vote for. I would never leave it blank. If there's an office I didn't want to vote for, I marked through the entire thing, but I would vote if I had to cast a blank ballot. If there was nobody there I wanted to vot for, I'd still go vote.

FH: How about you Fannie?

FG: Well, I believe that my involvement in politics really did not come about until I became involved, very deeply, in the union movement. The one exception to that is a period in, ah, in Chicago, I don't remember what year it was but there was a conserted effort on the part of a police chief, I believe it was, in Chicago, I think his name was Hanrahan, to wipe out a black, what was called Black Panther Party. And I don't know if you remember or not but a young man named, Hampton was killed within 3 blocks of where we lived. The police surrounded the apartment and shot those people up in there. And that area I lived in was all democratic. You know, almost all minorities in Chicago vote democratic and we were no exception. And in order to vote him out of office that meant a lot of the people in that neighborhood had to know how to split their tickets. So I got involved in that and he was voted out of office. But after that, you know, I went back to minding my own business, quote - unquote, which was taking care of my kids. But I really didn't get to involved and didn't pay to much attention to politics until, I guess I was in, involved in the labor movement.

MM: I recall, you asked me if I had been involved at all, been active; yes I have. I, I think probably just one little incident during the, I don't recall what year it was now, (sound of microphone being moved) it was during the primary when Sprouse and Rockefeller were opposed. I remember

Jay Rockefeller spending 2½ hours with me. That was prior to the _____ of making an endorsement, but he spent 2½ hours trying to convince me to support him rather than Jim Sprouse, Sprouse. And at that time I would make no commitment at all because I knew I'd go with the labor movement candidate. And I knew that was going to be Jim Sprouse. (laughter) But, ah, I guess I've been that active that a person like Jay Rockefeller would seek my support.

FH: Have you gone out and, ah, ah, done partisan political work for a candidate supported by the, you mentioned Jim Srpouse, did you do partisan, ah, volunteer work for Jim Sprouses campaign once the union endorsed him?

MM: Oh sure. Oh yeah, I attended all the democrat rallys (chuckles) made sure his name got mentioned in, see with that Sprouse campaign we did a, quite a unique thing in that primary. The very first primary he ran in. We took a virtually unknown, a very clean candidate and beat the democratic machine. And we worked in Harrison County, ah, he ran against Robertson and he come from Harrison County. We figured we won in Harrison County, we were bound to have but we felt real good about that. And there were, I think there was 4 of us women that did most of the work. Did all the leg work and the ground work and all that.

FH: Is that usually ture Mary, do the women generally do the, (MM: they do) the leg work?

MM: They do most of the behind the scenes work. Although I've never been a behind the scenes person (laughingly) I've usually been out front. (laughter) Can't keep me in the corner. Ah, but in that campaign I did take a leave of absence form the plant and, ah, the central body paid me a whole 12 dollars a day to do the phone bank.

FH: How long was your leave of absence?

MM: About 3 weeks I think it was.

FH: You gave up your pay for 3 weeks? (Ah huh) to work in that campaign?

MM: Yes I did. And I was to work just my regular work shift but I couldn't do that. I go home I get supper and I come right back. I was working about 18 hours a day, for 12 dollars. (laughs) But, ah, course I counted a lot fo that voluntary hours. But, ah, you, you, and I swore to myself after that, we lost the general election, that I would never get that wrapped up with a candidate again. Well I've been there ever since. (laguhter) Because I, you really do. When you lose to, that's like today, I can't vote for Arch Moore. (slight pause) I can't vote for Clyde See either. (laughter) So I'm up the creek.

FH: Have you felt that, as a woman that you, have you felt welcome in the political activity of the union?

MM: Oh yes. More than welcome.

FH: Have you found that true Fannie? (Mmm hmm) As a woman that you have been included with your, ah,

FG: I think one of the reasons that I feel very, ah, comfortable in the union movement is because of that kind of acceptance that I find and it's, it's, ah, maybe an acceptance, for whatever reason, I didn't feel in my earlier life in my day to day work, you know, just in Society. I feel a closeness in the union movement that I don't feel in other places. I feel it in my church, you know. But I feel that it's, it's kind of the same kind of thing. A group of people that really want to help other people. And I, you know, I feel real good about that, about being involved. And I feel I'm very much accepted by those people.

It's like the first few times I start going out to the labor federation, I didn't know those guys out there. And like Mary says they're mostly, mostly men. You know, it's, it's a very few times that you go to a meeting that it's 50-50. I don't think I've ever seen that Labor Federation 50-50, 4 women's probably the most. But the guys are just very accepting, you

know. It's like they expect you to be there and they expect your input and, you know, it's welcome.

FH: Well, why do you think there's so few women there?

FG: I don't really know. Ah, I guess it's like at my membership meetings, it's mostly the guys that come out to the membership meetings. Ah, for, one time I thought it was because the women had other responsibilities. They had the household chores and the kids and all that to take care of when they got home. But a few of our job stuards would bring their children with them. So that should not be prohibitive. I just don't know. Maybe women still think of unions as the, the, ah, realm for men. I don't know. Maybe they're still not educated to act that it's as much their business as it is the en wihtin in the union.

BM: Did you ever ask them specifically ot come Fannie?

FG: Indivdually?

BM: Yes.

FG: I don't, I don't remember having done that, no.

BM: I wonder what response you'd get if you specifically ask them to come.

MM: If we ask them to what?

BM: To come, just specifically to come.

MM: Oh yes. I find sometimes that you ask them to come and they say, they tell you they will jsut to get rid of you. But I, I don't think, ah, quite frankly I don't think in the labor movement it's been the men that have kept the womnen out, I think it's been the women that have kept themselves out. Because there was, every since I've been involved there was always something there for me to do. And nobody said I couldn't do it because I was a woman either.

FH: Do you agree with Fannie, however, that it might be - not that women don't want to go but that they don't, that they don't perceive that it's a, a woman's place or that, that it's something that they should be doing,

that perhaps they've been conditioned throughout their life to think that that kind of thing as more male.

MM: I think that they just don't wnat to make time for it. Quite frankly. I could have taken the same path. I had 2 little children to help raise. Although I did have a husband and all that but I think you, you can make time for most anything you want to do.

FH: What is the difference? That's interesting because both you and Fannie have had families and have home responsibilities. What do you think the difference is between the two of you and, getting involved and the women who have not?

MM: I, I have no idea.

FG: I don't know. I think personally that my involvement came about because I felt the union filled a need for me. And I think maybe that's what other women have to feel in order to get involved in the labor movement. I can see that as a vehicle for getting what I needed in, within my job. Getting the respect htat I felt that I deserved that I could not get by myself. Umm. I guess just taking the task, taking the company to task over some of the things that I felt they were doing that I oculdn't address by myself. And I feld the union could help me do that. It was a way that, you know, I could get that done. and also, like I said earlier, there was a kind of companionship and a kind of acceptance that I felt was in the union that I didn't feel, you know, normally in everyday type, day to day type situations. That's my personal feeling about it.

MM: I don't know. Sometimes I think maybe my interest in the labor movement is a substitute for my not having gone to college. Ah, it's offered me, ah, an opportunity to, I think, become very well educated. Not maybe in finance or mathematics or something like that but I think I've gotten a very good education through the labor movement.

FH: When you went to the summer school you went to the, since you brought up education, when you went to the summer school what kinds of, what was the routine there, what was the,

MM: If you want to say 45 hours, 45 minutes sleep in a whole week (laughter) well the State AFL-CIO Summer School is a 4-year course. When I, I met one instructor, went to the airport to help with, ah, one of the instructors pick up another instructor came into West Virginia for the first time and he had served in a short course class we were having that night and the next week I had a scholarship to go to summer school. That was my first year. I took a week off from work, with no pay, and went on a $100 scholarship to my first year.

FH: Where was this?

MM: At, ah, West Virginia University. And I went 4 years on that scholarship. By the time I finished the 4 years though I had, ah, I think the last year I went I had 2 and a half days paid vacation (laughs) and that's it. But anyway I did go to it on a scholarship. But you have different courses there for 2nd, 34d year, and 4th year courses such as stuard training, ah, colective bargaining, whole bunch of things like that. But outside of that I have, I think I could paper a room with the short courses I have taken.

FH: Offered by the AFL-CIO or

MM: The Institute for Labor Studies at West Virginia University. I've been very active in going to all their classes. I'm a graduate of the Union Leadership Academy also. Ah, I think this type courses, that type education gives you a well rounded education. To me it's better than the college education, along with learning all about politics.

FH: Is that where you learned about politics?

MM: Sure it is.

FH: How many people attend the summer Institute, would you say?

MM: Well the year, the last year, the year I graduated I think there was about 67.

FH: From all over the state?

MM: Well, some of them come from Maryland and some form Ohio too, occasionally a few. But this has been going on now, oh I can't remember how, when they first started. it was back, oh, used to be an extension course. There's an attorney that started he was the whole crux of it. He's attorney for the steel workers, what's his name, he was going to college becoming a, ah, to become an attorney and Miles Stanley, again, got the State Legislature to provide a little bit of money for labor education. That's how it all came about. I attended some of those classes back then too.

FH: How long ago was that?

MM: Ah, probably 60. The education started prior to that but I started attending classes about 1960.

FH: So very soon after you got involved in union activity you started attending the courses?

MM: I joined in 57 I think I went to my first ILG function outside of the local union meeting in 1958. Went to Huntington, Education class, (laughs) seminar I think is what it's called.

FH: Was that at Marshall?

MM: Ah, no. We just had it at one of the hotels. Hotel that's no longer there. What was the name of that, I can't remember. But it was a big one. We had those, it was the same place we held those, the last State AFL-CIO Convention that was held out of Charleston.

BM: Prichard?

MM: Prichard. And that also was my first State AFL-CIO Convention. My very first convention, (sort of chuckles) Oh God, I was put on the

education committee and the secretary for that committee didn't show up and they made me secretary _____. And nobody bothered to tell me what the duties of the secretary were outside of making the changes in the resolutions and such. They told me right before I had to do it that I had to read the (laughingly) _____, ah, the resolutions to the convention, and that was my first convention, but I did it.

FH: Your first convention and you had to

MM: And I was the only woman that did anything at all before that convention.

FH: Have you pursued the same kind of educational, services?

FG: Well, I have, ah, taken education classes at Penn State that, you know, my union sponsered. The Communication Workers of America sponsered. But I haven't been able to attend any of the courses at West Virginia University yet. We've been sending one of our executive board members. Linda Aymen has started their four year course and I think she's been goin 2 years in the fal. But I have attended some classes at Penn State, a couple of leadership trianing classes that they have at Penn State. You know, they teach assertative training and parlimentary procedure and, you know, how to, how to set your agenda and all that and run a meeting, a whole lot of different things. The comparable work issue came up at one of those sessions. A lot of very useful, ah, types of educational opportunities there. I agree with Mary in the statement that she made about the education that you could receive from the trade union movement that I did not know was available to us. And, I think I've learned a lot in just a few short years that I've been really involved in the labor movement, a lot that I never would have learned in a classroom other than in that kind of a setting and it concerns me that the kind of training we get in those kinds of institutes are not, that kind of training is not made available to,

like college students or high school kids or even grammer school kids because they have no idea of the kinds of contributions that labor has made and I think part of htat is the reason people in this country right now, they have a lot of negative feelings about unions. Because all they see is a negative. (end of side one - begin side 2)

FH: Fannie you were talking about the negative impression that people have about unions today. Would you, ah, go on about that a little bit?

FG: Well I think part of it is because what you see on television, say for instance if there's, ah, ah, an employer and a, and a labor orgainzation that are in a dispute. What you see on television is picketers walking upa dn down with a sign and they never really address the concerns or the issues of why the people are out there. And many times they're on a strike because of justice type issues or if the contract has been violated and that's the next step is to go out on stirke, then these people are within their right to do that. And they never will really address whether or not the employer, you know, is at fault; did he put these people in the street. I think they never really address the kinds of, ah, positive things that labor unions do. For instance, our union is involved in, in supporting Big Brothers and Big Sisters and helping with United Way Campaigns and stuff like that. You never see them, you know, report that kind of thing on the news. The only time you see them is when, you know, there's, there's a picket line out there. And I think that's too bad because it's very one-sided news reporting.

FH: Do you think that, in West Virginia do you think that the UMW has influenced people's perception of, of union, or of the trade union movement, period?

FG: I know that they have influenced peoples' perceptions of trade unions. Okay? But I know why the UMW had to take the stand that they took. When I read the kinds of conditions that they came out of, I don't fault them for anything. But other people don't know that. Other people only see

and hear the kinds of negatives, again, about the UMW. See the United Mine Workers had to come out of, ah, an environment where people were almost made slaves to big coal companies. You don't hear that. They don't tell you that they had, ah, the most militia mines someplace that shoot people back into the coal mine. And that's why United Mine Workers had to becom so militant. They don't tell you that. So I, I know that they have, ah, shaped the opinions that people have of labor movement. They have helped to shaped that and some of it has been negative but I think that the public has to look beyond that and find out what, why did they behave in the way that they did. And of course I guess there is some change in the way that the United Mine Workers are interacting with the coal mining companies now. There's, there's some toning down in the way that they are negotiating and the way they handle themselves. Whether that's good or bad I don't know.

FH: Have you seen the, the recession as (pause) a bad period for the labor movement, as a time of retreat for the labor movement?

MM: I don't think it's a time of retreat for the labor movement. I just don't think we have as many members. That's why we are so low now, because plants have closed down where our people work. Especially in Harrison County where I came from. Our membership is down something terrible. But it isn't that people aren't joining the unions, it's just that the factories are no longer there.

FH: And do you see a recovery for the labor movement if there's a general eonomic recovery?

MM: I would hpe that there should be.

FG: I think that there will be a recovery for the labor movement anyway. And I think that that has started to happen, I mean in support for labor movement. Because a few years back with all, with the recession you know and the economic climate, every employer was coming out demanding that they get

concessions in the union for giving them concessions as a way of trying to keep jobs for the members. And I think now many of the unions and many of their members see that for what it was. It was a trick. And now they are saying, O.K. if you, you know, if you're going to lay them off and move the plant, do it because we're not going to give up anything else. So in, in that way I think that, we'll start to recover again. The union movement will start to recover again.

FH: Do you think the union movement needs that sense of militantcy?

FG: Yes, I do. I think it's evident in what the auto workers are doing now and I've bought it. Because, you know, those companies can not continue to make a billion dollar, billion dollar profit and say, "Now if you all don't take a cut, we have to go to Japan." They're in Japan anyway. Everything they can make over there they're making there. our own communication workers are mostly in telephone industry and, umm, I don't rmember what report I read not to long ago but I did not realize the, ah, the factories that the telphone companies, the kinds of contracts that the telephone companies have let out over seas. ANd they're telling our people all the time we're going to have to consolidate here because we have to get mean and lean and tough. Well the union members have to get tough and mean again, too, I think. Because, ah, it seems to me that what has happened in the countries that we as unions have become very complacent too, that we started to take for granted a lot of the things that we were enjoying. And that we were enjoying as a result of, ah, struggles that people made. Like when Mary went and did, and worked for the AFL-CIO and had to volunteer and give up, ah, her days wages. By the time I really got involved almost all of the work I had, I've had to do outside of the telephone company I've been compensated by the union. So those kind of people who were out there on the lines when they did not get paid for it, those of us

who came along later kind of took that for granted that, you know, these benefits and these raises are out of the goodness of the companies heart, you know. This, this good standard of living that we enjoy is because the companies are benevolent and they care about us. We didn't think about the Mary Messingers and the Miles Stanley and the Joe Powells and all those people that had gone before and did all the struggle. And I think that's what we have to be educated to. Myself included.

MM: I, you touched on a line that, oh about the unions now, in a way Ronald Reagan may have been kind of good for us cause he's made us come alive again.

FH: Do you feel a new sense of, of, of solidarity at the meetings you go to?

MM: Oh yes. (pause)

FG: Yes, it's there.

MM: I don't hear any union people saying that they're voting for Reagan, ah, we do have one member (laughter) who'll be excomunicated, he should be. But really, I don't think that there is any strong support for Ronald Reagan in the labor movement, outside of the Teamsters. And I, quite frankly, I don't know whether that's, they say they sent out a questionaire to every member and it was unanimous. That would be very hard for me to believe. I could not, we have 43 members in the local union I belong to and I cuild not send out a questionaire,

BM: You'd never get unanimous

MM: and say is it, "Is it raining today?", and get back a unanimous decision. I I, I don't see how you would get a unanimous decision out of the Teamsters if they vote with all their members. That's impossible. (pause)

FH: Since we're talking about the future of unions in general, I wanted to ask you about what you see as the, (pause) the major problems of women in the labor movement today or, and/or in the workforce today, and in

the future. (pause)

FG: The major problem that I see of women in the workforce in the telephone industry, and that's the one I can, you know, speak best about cause that's where I work, it's just that a period in time when women and minorities were able to aspire to the higher craft jobs within our industry, those jobs are disappearing. And everybody's is being slotted down in like middle level jobs, you know, they're descaling the jobs. O.K., we have some high-tech, what people call high-tech and I'm not sure as to what they men when they say they're high-tech because what has happened in the telephone industry is they have put computers in to do peoples' jobs okay. But the jobs are borken down into so many different componets and they have different people doing, ah, like a segment of the job, okay, and thereby de-skilling that entire job. You only have to know a certain little part of it. And you feed your little bit into the machine and then someone else has to know a certain little part and they do their little bit, and then somebody else knows a little part and then they do that. And consequently company does not feel they have to pay you as muh because you don't have to have all that knowledge that you would have had to have before to do the whole job. And the jobs are being downscaled in pay. The high craft jobs that men used to occupy are being done away with little by little and I see like on they're clerical jobs is what almost all those jobs is being, ah, made into clerical jobs and deskilled and women are going to be the, ah, over, over, not overpopulated with women, that's not the word I want to use, but there would be more women in that job than men.

FH: Well if the jobs that are being eliminated, the high-skill jobs are mostly men's, are men then moving down into these middle level jobs?

FG: Some of themen are. But some of the men are taking what they call _____,

like they take early retirement. Some of the men are reluctant to move into those kinds of jobs because they have to take clerical tests. And some men don't feel that they should be clerical type people, you know what I'm trying to say. They look upon that, when women did it, it was o.k. it was women's work you know. And so now they've got themselves in a bind. If they do it and it's women's work, are they women, you know, it's just, it's kind of strange. But we can't get some of our guys to take a clerical test, they say they shouldn't have to know how to type. Yet women in here at least should know how to type, women should've done those jobs, without complaint.

BM: _____ to a degree.

FG: Yes they do.

FH: So could the CWA and the telephone industry in general once again become the sort of, ah, haven of low paid women, women's jobs?

FG: Dominated by women. Except in those extreme circumstances where they have engineers, okay. By and large the engineers are male, even today. Ah, we don't have a lot of, ah, we don't have computer programers liek that in offices here. And Clarksburg, I don't know if they have any in Charleston or not. They do in some of the offices in New Jersey and those kinds of places and those are mostly men's jobs. But where we go back to the operators and we go back to, ah, the jobs that in, are the inside jobs, those jobs are going to be dominated by women and those jobs are going to be down skilled.

FH: Does the Communication Workers of America have any kind of plan to deal with that, has there been has there been a lot of talk about this very fact?

FG: There has been, there's been, there's been two different training programs that I know of that the Communication Workers have been instrumental in

getting started within the telephone industry. But when the divestiture of the company came about, it kind of threw our plans and everything out of wack. Wverything is kind of in limbo and I think at this point in time nobody really knows where the company is headed, you know, so it's really hard to plan when you don't know where you're goint to be 3 years form now or 5 years from now or 10 years down the line. there was some, there was a press release last, just last week I think when AT & T had announced they were going to lay off 11 or 12 thousand more people and the president of Communication Workers of America asked that we go in and re-negotiate, you know, that, that, ah, AT & T contract. So this is kind of a bad time for Communication Workers to try to come up with some way of down skilling people's jobs and their primary concern is just trying to hold on to the job that they have, you know, keep jobs period for the people that are, you know, employed now. So I, I just don't know where it's headed, until the divestiture, the dust from the divestiture has setled down and we see where we are.

BM: How long do you think that will take Fannie?

FG: I have no idea.

BM: You think it'll take a couple of years?

FG: (pause) Mmm, I don't think it will take more than 2 years for them to completly wreck the system. Surly by then we can start to build something back up but its, its really a shame when I talk to people on the street and, I was very much involved in a community relations team from the telephone company and it was, ah, management and craft people working together in the different communities getting some visibility for the telephone company. And I wa very much involved in that until the _____. So a lot of people will ask me about things, you know, in the telephone industry. ANd it's very sad because at one time when you call somebody when you had a problem with your service and get an answer pretty quickly

and it was a, you know, a pretty reliable answer. Now you can call 15 thousand, 15 people to get 15 answers and still not one of them be right. It's just, ah, it's just a period that we'll have to, you know, they'll have to work it out. (pause) But the sad thing about that and the scary thing about that right now is a lot of times people tend to blame the unions. The unions hsoulc have stopped this, why didn't the union do something about that. Well we can't stop the telephone company from divesting, you know, you can't do that. A lot of people do not recognize the limitations that unions have imposed upon them. You know, you can work within a certain realm and that's all you can do and they don't recognize that. Something will go wrong at work and a person can go and petition to the supervisor or to the company to do something for them and if the company doesn't do it and then they come to the union and say they did this, this, and this to me and go do something about it and you say well you don't have any, under the contract there's nothing we can do. You, the company's not the bad guy for doing it to them, you're the bad guy for not making them stop it. And it's, it's very difficult. I thing that, I think that the answers lay in educating the members and I think the answer lays in educating the general public.

FH: If the, if the workforce becomes predomninately women, then the union membership would be predominately women. Would you see that leading to a weakening of the Communication Workers, as a union?

FG: I don't think so. I don't think so because, I don't know if I mentioned it before but in someones' office in Washington I saw a picture of a convention that Communication Workers of America had way back in the late 40s, and at that time it appeared that most of the delegates were women. And Communication Workers labor organizations is by, I think it's one of the better organizations in the country, I feel that. And that organization

has been built on what those women put together. And I feel that very strongly. Mary said, a lot of times the women are the ones behind the scenes doing the work and it simply means some of them will have to come out of the closet and get in front and do some of hte work that they're doing. I don't see any problem with it. I think that a lot more women are recognizing that they do have abilities, you know, and they're willing to take chances and willing to get up and, and, ah, if they have to chair a meeting. They're not going to be perfect but some men are not perfect and I think that's a, course a fallacy in our society where we think power means that you have a three-piece suit and you're a white male, you know. It has nothing to do with that.

FH: Do you see yourself as continuing to be an activist and perhaps taking on more of a responsibility in terms of recruiting women to leadership roles since you have been successful in being and role model for, and encouraging other women to, to accept leadership responsibility?

FG: I think I probably will be doing that. But I think I also will be encouraging more men to accept leadership roles within the union and it's simply because so many people right now are just kind of, ah, they just kind of take a nonchalant attitude about it. They don't recognize the fact that their futures are, are involved in what the unions are doing and can do. So I think an awareness is needed on the part of men and women. But certainly I see myself as, as, ah, an activist to get women involved. Where my commmittee, my district women's committee is conducting a survey to find out exactly what it is the women in our district feel that they need, what are their concerns, what can we do to help them get more involved in the union.

FH: Is that information that you could share with us on an anonymous basis, the results of a survey like that?

FG: I will share it with you once we have it compiled. (pause)

FH: Mary what do you think in terms of the, say the, ah, ah, ah, the garment workers, and what are the problems facing women in that industry or in the American Federation of Teachers?

MM: I would say a problem for garment workers, it's been a problem for the last 20, 25 years is imports and run-away shops to the South. That's been our big problem. American Federation of Teachers, I just come back from the National Convention which by the way Geraldine Ferraro was our speaker and it might interest you to know, I don't know if you know it or not but she was a member of the American Federation of Teachers back when there was only 2000 members of the local when it was very unpopular for a teacher to belong to a labor union. There's now 40 some thousand in that local. But that was one of the high lights of our convention.

Ah, teachers do take a, or American Federation of Teachers, women seem to be taking a much more active role. I noticed at the national convention of Lady Garment Workers that I belong to, they seem very active.

FH: And yet those are both predominately (MM: women) female memberships.

MM: They have male leadership. My own local union thought a, is a little diffeent. I think we're about 50/50. We only have one male officer.

FH: In the AFT?

MM: At Local 4009. We only have one male officer, he's the vice-president and I talked him in to running. (laughs) But, ah, and the people that attend the meeting, 90 percent of the people that show up are females.

FH: In your local?

MM: In our local.

FH: Do you suppose that has anything to do with you?

MM: No, no I really don't. (laughs)

FH: Don't be modest. Do you think it has anything to do with your, role?

MM: Speaking of clerical, in our company our clerical have come way, way, way up from what they were before we had a union, in fact it was the clerical help that did most of the orgainizing. That's where all the gripes were. And that's where they continue to be and I think it's simply because our director thinks that clerical is just something you wipe your feet on. He, ah, we had one clerical person that did take a hit in our last negotiations but there was really nothing we could do about it. She didn't get another $5 increase that she should have, and she'd been receiving the same pay as the other person all along. But it, simply because she spends most of ther time answering the phone. But we, we could not convince the director that was anything unfair.

FH: Do most women that you talk to favor comparable work?

MM: Oh yes. I don't think we would have it in our, I don't think we would have it for the company I work for if we didn't, if they didn't. I don't think I could have sold it. On _____ I sold a contract that, huh, that I wasn't the happiest with. We've got a good contract but we felt we should have a little bit more but, that was all we could get. There was just nothing more there. (pause) We're a little unique in our negotiations. When we negotiate a wage increase, it ha, it's negotiated with the understanding that if we aren't funded (END OF TAPE)